

John Cook House - Ballroom
35 Elm Street
(north side between Orange and State Streets)
New Haven
New Haven County
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-270

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
801 - 19th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. CONN-270

JOHN COOK HOUSE - BALLROOM

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Location: 35 Elm Street (north side between Orange and State Streets), New Haven County, New Haven, Connecticut.

Present Owner: The Visiting Nurses Association, 35 Elm Street, New Haven, Connecticut.

Present Occupant: The Visiting Nurses Association.

Present Use: Headquarters and residence.

Statement of Significance: Ballroom on attic floor attributed by Architectural Historian J. Frederick Kelly to architect David Hoadley. House is one of the first stone residences in New Haven. It is built on land once occupied by Theophilus Eaton, first governor of Connecticut. Possibly situated on basement of the Sarah Jones Morrison House, built before 1722.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which house was built, taken from the New Haven Land Records, for the City of New Haven. Attached excerpt from A Porringer of Cockney contains a history of ownership of the property from 1638 to 1919.

6 April 1805 John Cook bought land from heirs of Samuel Bishop. New Haven Land Records, Vol. 54, p. 260.

1814 John Cook to Captain James Goodrich cf. A Porringer of Cockney.

1859 Heirs of James Goodrich to Charles Atwater, Jr. op. cit.

1877 Charles Atwater, Jr. to Dr. Charles A. Lindsley, op. cit.

July 1906 Estate of C. A. Lindsley to Dr. Mary P. Dole.

1919 Mary P. Dole to The Visiting Nurses Association, op. cit.

(Ed. note: Visiting Nurses Association sold property in 1967 and vacated premises.)

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2. Date of erection: After 1805.
3. Architect: Attributed to David Hoadley, 1774-1838.

"As a self-taught architect Mr. Hoadley had no superior in his day in the State; the correctness of his design and purity of details equalling the work of the best professionals," Mr. J. Frederick Kelly, an authority on Colonial architecture, believes the woodwork in the Goodrich ballroom is by Hoadley -- which leads him to date that room after 1814, when Hoadley was in New Haven, rather than the period when the house was occupied by John Cook." op. cit. p. 36.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: None recorded.
5. Alterations and additions: Addition of ballroom in attic with two fireplaces, c. 1815. Addition of dormer windows in alcoves of the ballroom, c. 1835.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

The house is built on the site of Governor Theophilus Eaton's mansion. Captain James Goodrich, prosperous merchant, built ballroom.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Dana, Arnold G. "New Haven Old and New." Unpublished scrapbooks in the archives of the New Haven Colony Historical Society, 114 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, Connecticut.

The New Haven Land Records, Land Records Office, The Hall of Records for the City of New Haven, Orange Street, New Haven, Connecticut. Vol. 333, p. 444.

2. Secondary and published sources:

The New Haven City Directory, 1840 to 1952, copies in the Public Library, the Town Clerk's office, the New Haven Colony Historical Society Library.

Baker, Christina Hopkinson. A Porringer of Cockney. New Haven, Conn.: The Visiting Nurses Association, Yale University Press, 1930.

Prepared by Jonathan B. Conant
Research Assistant
National Park Service
August 31, 1964

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Character of the ballroom is established by the vaulted plaster ceiling which is under the gabled attic roof. Diameter of the vault is less than the width of the room, creating the spatial interest of the true semi-circle of the vault contrasted with the widely projecting plane of the cornice soffit. With good proportions and scale thus established, the space is further enriched by detailed woodwork, motifs of which were established by the two end mantels. The ballroom attests to the prosperity of owner merchantman Captain James Goodrich. The John Cook House which contains the ballroom has a five bay front with quoins of milled stone and milled stone architrave, stucco surface, Greek Revival Ionic porch. Entrance door has elliptical fan light. Gable roof has dormers.
2. Condition of fabric: Good and well maintained.

B. Description of the Interior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The ballroom proper measures 40'-9" x 19'-6" with a ceiling height at the top of the vault of 13'-4- $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The height to the top of the cornice is 8'-10". The room is symmetrically composed about both axis with the main entrance a pair of double doors in the center of long northeast wall. A similar double doorway, cased, without doors, is placed opposite on southwest wall.

The entrance doorway is projected slightly into room, a condition created by stair landing at entrance. It appears that trim of both double doors is of a later date since meeting of moldings is more crudely executed than in other parts of room. Both double doors are flanked on each side by single doors leading to small rooms which were probably used for wraps and for preparation of refreshments. These rooms are situated under dormers.

There is a fireplace on each end wall, flanked by modern double-hung windows set with deep panelled reveal in the exterior masonry walls. Mantelpieces may have been brought in since shelf of southeast fireplace projects beyond the wall behind it. A semi-circular lunette is placed over each fireplace.

2. Stairways: Stairway from second floor to ballroom ends at a landing outside ballroom doors. Stairway was originally open to ballroom. HABS
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3. Flooring: Modern linoleum.
4. Walls and ceiling finish: The walls are plastered both above and below chair rail. Vaulted ceiling and soffit of projecting cornice are also plastered.
5. Doorways and doors: There are doors at all openings except at cased double doorway on southwest wall; wooden doors have five raised panels on both faces.
6. Windows: Modern double-hung, six-over-six-light windows flanking fireplaces are set with 12" reveals in exterior walls. Reveal is panelled in wood with two panels on each side and one in the soffit above. Lunettes are also set in deep reveals and each contains ten radiating lights.

Small end rooms have swinging casements in exterior masonry walls; heads are one-quarter circle. Each window has three radiating lights above one quarter-circle light over four rectangular lights.

7. Fireplaces: The exposed brick facing of each fireplace is framed by a wooden mantel containing slender pilasters subdivided into two recessed panels between the plinth and architrave which breaks out over the pilasters. Between molded architrave and more elaborate cornice is a panelized frieze; central panel and cornice project outward. This panel is ornamented with horizontally incised elliptical rosette. A similar but smaller rosette is placed vertically over the pilasters. An identical motif is also used on the plinth blocks, however, as a true circular rosette. Lowest element of cornice is a small-scaled dentil-like banding fashioned in three planes. Above this banding is a series of moldings forming a flat profile to support mantel shelf which bows out over central motif. Shelf edge is reeded between two small filets.
8. Decorative features and trim: Basic rosette motifs of fireplaces are repeated with variation in scale in door and window architraves; pilasters framing openings are panelled with single recessed panel. A true circular rosette is placed in the plinth and also in projecting entablature of windows. Rosette in door entablature is vertical elliptical rosette. Fireplace banding is repeated at a much larger scale and cornice moldings are also repeated.

Immediately above this unit is the larger scaled crowning cornice of the room which projects 3'-7" beyond the face of the longitudinal walls as a support for the vaulted ceiling. On the end walls only the uppermost member projects beyond the wall plane. Incorporated in the design is a banding of connected lozenge shapes containing a sub-motif of incised circles. This motif is repeated at a larger scale on the soffit of the topmost member. The general effect of the main cornice is one of flat planes, deep undercuts, flattened circles and rhythmic patterns, scaled to the proportions of the room. Chair rail has band of connected circles set in two planes, the inner circle is incised within the outer one. This motif is repeated in the window sills which are at a lower height than chair rail. The compound molded baseboard is boldly profiled, standing 8-3/8" high.

9. Hardware: Modern.

10. Lighting: Modern.

11. Heating: Two fireplaces, not used.

C. Site and Surroundings:

General setting and orientation: North side of Elm Street, between Orange and State Streets, Longitudinal axis is north-east-southeast.

Prepared by Woodrow W. Wilkins
Architect
National Park Service

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of the Summer, 1964 New Haven Project, jointly undertaken by the HABS and the New Haven Preservation Trust, and financed by "Mission 66" funds of the National Park Service with assistance from the NHPT, following a 1963 HABS inventory survey of old New Haven carried out by the NHPT under the direction of Professor Christopher Tunnard of Yale University, President.

The project was under the direction of the Eastern Office of Design and Construction, James C. Massey, HABS Supervisory Architect, and was supervised by Architect Woodrow W. Wilkins, Professor of Architecture at the University of Kentucky, assisted by Ned Goode, Photographer, Frazier, Pennsylvania; Annette H. M. Gottschalk, William P. Hersey, and Charles R. Tichy, Student Assistant Architects and students at Carnegie Institute of Technology, Yale University, and Iowa State University, respectively; and Jonathan B. Conant, Research Assistant and student at Yale University.